



Dear Colleague:

The APHIS Eastern Regional Office (AERO) in Raleigh, NC, is opening for business August 30. Together, we are beginning a new and exciting working partnership and creating new opportunities for success. For some of you, the transition of administrative support is underway and for others, it is beginning soon. The people in Minneapolis are looking forward to working together with you and are anxious to learn how they can help you.

Minneapolis Business Services (MBS) is the administrative service provider for personnel, procurement, and some financial services. Simply put, once you identify your need and obtain approvals required by your program, let us know and MBS will make it happen. Our intent is to minimize the impact of this reorganization on the field offices and we invite you to tell us if you are experiencing any difficulties.

For some of you, things will continue as before just from a different location perhaps. For others the change is more evident. Perhaps we can all look to those who are not experiencing a significant change for many of our best answers.

One of the concerns we hear most often is, "Now that the Regional Administrative support is gone, do we have to take on all that work?" No. Actually, the Regional Administrative support was transferred to MBS. Our role in the reorganization is to provide all administrative support to APHIS programs. The first phase of this reorganization applies to the Eastern states and AERO.

To help you access various services, we established services teams for each program. MBS managers are identified as service team leaders to address service concerns and coordination. Feel free to contact anyone on the attached Service Team list and they will help you. To further support our Eastern customers, MBS established the Raleigh Customer Support Services at the AERO. This staff works directly with the program Regional Directors and state officials to facilitate program-wide administrative service, troubleshoot service issues, and, if necessary, intervene to resolve administrative problems.

As administrative service providers, we implement program decisions. If you want to hire someone or buy something, follow your program's approval process, contact us and we're in business!

Contacting us is as simple as picking up the phone, e-mail, fax, or completing request forms. Soon, we will have Lotus Notes-based personnel and procurement systems. You will be hearing more about that in the near future.

We understand the importance of on-going communication . . . especially during this time of transition. Our webpage at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mpls/> has been enhanced. You will find information on obtaining service, up-to-date phone listings, new initiatives, up-coming events, etc. In addition, you will receive our newsletter, AdNotes each quarter. AdNotes gives helpful hints and timely information about MBS services.

We look forward to our new working relationship. Please call me at 612-370-2207 if you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions.

David R. Gradick, Manager
Minneapolis Business Services

**MRP BUSINESS SERVICES-MINNEAPOLIS
ADNOTES-AUGUST 1999**

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REGIONALIZATION UPDATE

There continues to be a lot of activity in Minneapolis getting ready for the Raleigh Hub opening on August 23, 1999. Below are some of the highlights and recent results:

*** Raleigh Administrative Support.**

The Raleigh Hub will have four administrative support centers of capabilities:

- ☛ MRP-Business Services will have an office (Raleigh Customer Support Services - RCSS) to provide advice and guidance on procurement and personnel operations. The on-site manager (MBS Coordinator) will be a member of the Raleigh Management Team, along with the Eastern Regional Directors, and will act as a liaison with the Minneapolis staff. RCSS will also manage the Raleigh facilities, mail center, supply center, etc.
- ☛ An Employee Relations and Information Technology staff will be on-site to support all the Program needs in their respective functional areas.
- ☛ Finally, each Program will have staff located in the Hub to address the budget and fiscal needs.

*** Congratulations are in order!**

Annette Maros was selected for the Raleigh MBS Coordinator. Annette is a native Minnesotan who has been in this office for over 20 years. She's looking forward to the new challenges, and a potentially "warmer winter". Through her years here she has worked in a variety of functional areas; i.e. Telecommunications, Realty, Claims, and most recently in a staff position as Customer Service Consultant. Annette will bring to Raleigh lots of personal knowledge in administrative areas, and full support from her colleagues and friends in Minneapolis.

***Mpls Move Coordinators.** There has been a group of "internal move coordinators" working with the Programs on closing the Regional Offices. We've begun getting estimates for moving things to Raleigh and

provided guidance on excessing property. The Telecommunications Team is also working to ensure that phone service is cut off when needed; phones are excessed appropriately, etc. Following is the updated closing schedule, if anyone has any questions regarding these closings, the Move Coordinators & Telecommunications contacts are listed:

July 31 -- Animal Care, Annapolis and Investigative Enforcement Services, Annapolis (Maria Zapata/Move ext. 2475; Michelle Fernandez/Phones ext. 2390)

August 20 -- Wildlife Services, Nashville (Barb Knotz/Move ext 2201; Michelle Fernandez/Phones ext. 2390)

September 7 -- Plant Protection & Quarantine, Gulfport (Barb Knotz/Move; Diana Halsey/Phones ext. 2122)

September 7 -- Veterinary Services, Tampa (Ginny Madden/ Move ext. 2151; Arlette Johnson/ Phones ext. 2229)

September 30 -- Plant Protection & Quarantine, Moorestown (George Hartson/Move ext. 2105; Diana Halsey/Phones ext 2122)

September 30 -- Veterinarian Services, Albany (George Hartson/ Move ext. 2105; Arlette Johnson/ Phones ext. 2229)

October -- Temporary Space on Wade Avenue and Plant Health Center

***Forms, Forms, Forms --- where do they come from and where do they go?** Forms distribution is one area which continues to need work. Each Program handles the distribution of forms somewhat differently --- some State offices keep a supply and receive their own documents; others were supplied and distributed through Regional offices. With the closing of the Eastern Offices, there is a need to be clear where customers can get forms they need and what the flow of documents should be. We anticipate this being a topic of discussion for some time to come, we'll probably discover needs as we go along. **The general**

rule for documents generated here in Minneapolis (i.e. purchase orders, position descriptions, etc.) is that the requestor of the service will be the person who receives the copies. We're continuing to research the best way to distribute NFC generated forms; we'll keep everyone informed as we progress. If you are in need of forms, or curious why you received a copy of something, don't hesitate to call the Program Service Providers or functional team here in Minneapolis.

Questions and ideas regarding the opening of the Raleigh Hub, the closing of the Regional Offices or anything related to the Eastern States consolidation can be sent to: (612) 370 -

Mary Wintch	ext 2107
Annette Maros	ext 2226
Denise Barnes	ext 2147
Mary Thornhill	ext 2185
Nancy Bradford	ext 2473
Pam Lyons	ext 2238

*** APHIS Form 81 Cash Payments ***

When service is provided to a customer that does not have an account established, it is important to record the actual dollar amount received on the APHIS Form 81 in the payment received block. This will help facilitate the process of issuing refunds and identifying underpayments when the value of the service differs from the amount collected.

In the event that service is provided and no payment is received:

- Complete the APHIS Form 81 for the services and indicate the payment received as zero.
- Transmit the invoice to the National Data Base.
- Notify MRP Business Services-Minneapolis of the control number via e-mail or fax to (612) 370-2293. If available, please include the customer's phone number. This will allow us to perform immediate debt collection on the amount due.

Establishing an Account for Veterinary Services (VS) User Fees

Customers that will require user fee services more than six times per year can establish a credit account with USDA, APHIS. The customer may complete the APHIS Form 192 (Dec 94) and fax the application to our office at 612 370-2293. APHIS requires that a signed credit application and tax identification number be on file for every account established. The Accounts Receivable Team verifies the credit history of the requesting customer using Dun and Bradstreet information, as well as trade and bank references. Recurring customers may elect not to establish a credit account or may be denied an account based on their credit history. These customers must continue to pay for services using a money order, check or credit card at the time the services are performed.

||| Estimated Receivables for FY 1999 Year-End Close Out |||

Detailed procedures will be sent out in the near future with instructions and deadlines for the close out of FY 1999. Here are a couple of highlights to be aware of:

Wildlife Services

The Accounts Receivable Team enters estimated receivables for your Reimbursable Cooperative Agreements from our listing of open bills. A quarterly listing is sent to your office to review. Please ensure that we have correct information. If you have questions or need a new listing, please call Dean Baillif at (612) 370-2389.

Veterinary Services

Field offices are reminded of the importance of transmitting all their APHIS 81 information by September 30th, 1999. Any office that cannot transmit needs to provide estimated receivable for all 81s that have not been transmitted to the Accounts Receivable Team. If you have any questions, please contact Carol Anderson at 612-370-2294 for the Western Region, and Lucy Currie at 612-370-2236 for the Eastern Region.

PPQ-ROT

For PPQ, estimated receivables are calculated by the Budget and Accounting Service Enhancement (BASE) staff in Riverdale. Also, for ROT services performed at fiscal year end, Field offices are reminded to bill the fiscal years on separate APHIS 89's. If you have any questions, please call Phil Amundson at 612/370-2094.

Funds for Change-Making Purposes

Many offices collect fees on-site for a variety of services that APHIS provides. The preferred form of collection for these services is check, money order or credit card (where available). Cash can be accepted when the payee cannot utilize one of the preferred methods. When this occurs it may be necessary to accommodate the payee by providing change when they do not have the exact cash amount. Many offices in the past have utilized a Class D Imprest Fund Cashier for this purpose. This is a person who receives an advance of funds solely for change-making purposes. With the elimination of all imprest funds in USDA and the subsequent elimination of the NFC Imprest Fund Payment System, a new process for providing offices the needed funds for change-making purposes has been established. The purchase card convenience check can be used to establish a change-making fund for your office. Here are the guidelines to follow:

1. Designate two individuals to be accountable for the change-making fund. This designation can be documented in writing and kept in your local office files. Recommended amount should be \$50 to \$100, depending on the level of activity. One person will be the primary accountable person for the fund, another person, the secondary.
2. The primary holder will complete an SF-1164, Claim for Reimbursement. Purpose of payment will be: "Establish change-making fund". The form will be signed by the primary holder and approved by the office manager or supervisor. This transaction will be treated as a current expense for accounting purposes. As such, a current fiscal year accounting classification code can be used as determined by the local office and the budget object code should be 2580 (fees).
3. The SF-1164 will be presented for payment to a purchase card holder with convenience check writing authority. Note: Writing convenience checks to one's self or out to "Cash" is prohibited. A copy of the SF-1164 should also be maintained in your local office files.
4. Safekeeping of the change-making fund should be maintained relative to the size of the fund as well as the vulnerability of the facility. A cash box or cash drawer stored in a locked file cabinet should suffice.
5. The change making fund should be counted periodically (at least annually) by a designated third person. Any lost or stolen funds should be reported immediately to ABS-Minneapolis. Payments Team at 612/370-2195.
6. No other forms or reports are necessary in the maintenance of this fund. Internal controls and accountability are maintained at the local office. If it becomes necessary to eliminate the fund, convert the cash to a money order and submit it on an AF-94 accompanied by a copy of the original SF-1164 to ABS-Minneapolis Accounts Receivable Team.

Fiscal Year 1999 Financial Records - End Of Year Close Accelerated Schedule

We have been notified by the Department's Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) that some changes are needed to accelerate the schedule for "closing the books" for Fiscal Year 1999. This is necessary because of a commitment to produce

timely and auditable Consolidated Financial Statements for USDA, and NFC consolidation of agencies processing in the current Central Accounting System (CAS) and agencies that have converted to the new Foundation Financial Information System (FFIS). Agency budget and financial staffs will be provided detailed end of year planning guidelines in the near future. To give you a "heads up", here are a few of the significant changes that will occur:

- Final Transmission to NFC: Minneapolis Business Services (MBS) will have to send their final transmission (e.g., miscellaneous payments, adjustments, estimated obligations or estimated receivables) on October 1, 1999 by 4PM CDT. In contrast, at the end of FY 1998, this date was October 5, 1998. All deadlines prior to this will be adjusted accordingly to allow APHIS to meet this deadline.
- End of year spending: Significant year end obligations should be decided by September 26th, to the extent possible. Yes, spending and obligating can continue through September 30, 1999. However, there will probably have to be estimates put in the system until the actual documents can be processed and recorded.
- Final Close Out Adjustments: We will be given an extra week for Programs to submit their final close out data after production of the September accounting reports. This date will be October 22, 1999. Again, in contrast at the end of FY 1998, this date was October 15, 1999. To facilitate an orderly reporting of these final adjustments, scheduled appointments will be held with BASE staff, Budget Execution, Financial Services and the Program Analyst. The meetings will review and correct any variances in the availability, obligation and reimbursement adjustments, and final unobligated balance. We will work to resolve any discrepancies the same day (but no later than Monday, the 25th).

Don't wait until September to start closing your books - Do IT NOW!

You can confirm availability by appropriation code, review and de-obligate funds to be used this year and begin planning end of year spending. Fiscal year end can become quite hectic so program budget and financial staffs are encouraged to review Chapter 8 of the APHIS Budget and Accounting Manual. This will familiarize you with items that need to be reviewed and significant obligations that can begin to be firmed up.

Electronic Information Distribution System

As advances in technology continue, the National Finance Center (NFC) is looking at new methods of disseminating accounting reports. Last year, NFC purchased the Electronic Information Distribution System (EIDS) from Rogers Software Development, Inc. EIDS captures application reports (such as the I1- Detail Transaction Report from the Central Accounting System and the Detailed Aging Accounts Receivable report from the Billings and Collection System) and stores them in a report warehouse. The system allows users to view stored reports on-line; the reports are stored for a predetermined number of months and then archived. Once archived, the user may process an overnight request for a report to be restored. Reports can be stored and distributed on CD-ROM as well.

APHIS asked to test the system to determine if this would be a low cost solution to printing NFC reports at remote dial-up sites. APHIS also saw the potential benefit of accessing many years of data for research purposes. Giana Jowers, the APHIS Project Manager, wrote test requirements; the test was conducted in late May 1999. The APHIS test team consisted of Giana Jowers, Sheila Hensley, Roy Mattson, Debbie Paulson, Frank Sanders and Jonathan Parks from APHIS. Nine team members from NFC, led by Bill Dell as project manager, worked on security issues, telecommunications issues and system engineering issues.

APHIS is encouraged by the test results which showed that on-line access to stored reports is possible. However, some problems must still be resolved before the system can meet our needs. Maneuvering around the system is not an intuitive process and detailed procedures must be written before the system is ready to be implemented in APHIS. In addition, the test of the CD-ROM proved that more work must be done before the CD-ROM is a user-friendly product. The NFC team is very optimistic that the initial snags can be overcome and the APHIS project team is hopeful that this new product will prove to be useful for research and CD-ROM distribution. Look for more information as it becomes available.

don't fix it!" It is a valid question and deserves further explanation. Imprest Fund Cashiers in APHIS were notified recently that with the implementation of the purchase card convenience checks, the need for local imprest funds should be examined and consideration should be given to closing them. With the problems encountered with the new Purchase Card Management System (PCMS), continuation of imprest funds can continue for the immediate future. However, as these problems are rectified, it may be inevitable that we will eventually be pressured at both the Federal and Department levels to eliminate the imprest funds. This initiative is driven by a couple items:

1. Federal Cash Management - your cash fund is small when looked at the local level. But magnify that in the "big picture" of thousands of Federal offices maintaining "cash" outside the Treasury and this amounts to millions of dollars sitting idle. The new purchase card and the convenience check tool allow small expenses to be paid; the funds do not leave the Treasury until the checks clear the banking system.
2. NFC Imprest Fund System - Last year NFC reported the cost of operating this system at over \$581,000. These costs, in turn, get assessed to the agencies. This is a cost charged to APHIS programs at the national level. Consequently, you do not see the direct costs against your office budget. However, it reduces your annual budget allocation upfront. NFC's goal is to eventually eliminate this system.

This gives you some insight on the "drivers" of these initiatives. We encourage you to examine and experiment with the convenience checks to see how you can handle the expenses now being paid from your imprest fund. Please do not hesitate to call Mike Backstrom, Payments, at 612/370-2195 if you have any questions.

Why are we being asked to close our Imprest Funds?

This question has been asked frequently in the past couple of months. It is usually followed by "they are working well and, if it is not broke,

PURCHASE CARD MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (PCMS) UPDATE

Everyone is quite aware, from top managers in USDA to the individual cardholders, that since the implementation of the Purchase Card Management System (PCMS) on November 29, 1998, numerous problems have been encountered. Be assured that your concerns are being heard at the highest levels and that Nations Bank, the Department, and the National Finance Center (NFC) are working to resolve the problems and create a positive, user friendly system for all users. There are several high priority issues that are being addressed:

- Refining the interfaces between PCMS and Nations Bank to allow for the free flow of data between the two systems. This would help expedite the establishment and changes to cardholder accounts, the recording of purchase transactions in PCMS and the accounting system reports.
- Increasing the response time for users accessing the system. To do this, NFC is looking at reconfiguring and moving certain "views" in the database software, as well as obtaining newer, high-speed hardware "servers" to run the PCMS software application.
- Developing a web-enabled version of PCMS. However, a date for deployment will not be set until the server upgrade to correct the system slowness has occurred.

There are two specific issues we would like cardholders to be aware of: the process of

disputing charges and missing transactions.

DISPUTES

Nations Bank is distributing dispute forms to cardholders who have disputed charges in PCMS. Cardholders need to complete the information, sign the document and submit it to the bank for processing. Because this procedure is not a part of the contract, the Department is working with them to change this procedure.

NFC and cardholders have noted that the bank is posting more \$1.40 fees to cardholder accounts than checks written. The bank is researching this problem. Because the dollar amounts in general are minimal, cardholders should not dispute these check fees or credits. Also, cardholders have expressed a desire to have the check fee posted next to the check on the view transactions screen. With the current software configuration, this kind of format is not possible. Later, when some of the major issues described above are rectified, these issue can be examined in more detail.

MISSING TRANSACTIONS

Due to transmission and downloading problems between Nations Bank and NFC, there are a few transactions that have not been loaded into PCMS. In the PCMS bulletin board, the Department has indicated that transactions have been loaded for:

December 1-16, 21-24, 28-31
January 4-29
February 1-5, 9-26
March 1-8, 10-31
April 1-13

If you are waiting for the appearance of a transaction from another date other than what is listed, no action is necessary as we must wait for the bank and NFC to load it.

If you are missing a transaction on a date listed,

please contact your Local Agency Program Coordinator (LAPC).

Some cardholders are reporting that they are unable to retrieve any data in PCMS. The most common cause is that Nations Bank has not submitted the cardholder data to NFC to be loaded into PCMS. This is related to the interface problems cited above. Until this task is accomplished, the cardholder will not be able to retrieve the data. The LAPC and Agency Program Coordinator (APC) are unable to accomplish this from their applications. We do expect Nations Bank to resolve and load this information in July.

BUDGET OBJECT CODES

Cardholders should take care to use a Budget Object Classification Code as accurately as possible to describe the transaction according to the nature of the supplies and services received. Charging costs to inaccurate codes can sometimes have an adverse effect when the financial managers and budget analysts are projecting costs for the agency's status of funds process.

USE OF PURCHASE CARD AND CONVENIENCE CHECKS

On the positive side, we have heard many comments about the usefulness and the expediency of being able to use purchase cards and convenience checks for micro-purchases at the local level. Overall this will prove to be a more cost effective method of obtaining the supplies and services you need to do your jobs. Generally the use of these tools on the "front-end" have been successful and problems have been minimal. We will continue to work with the Department and monitor the progress in solving the

"back-end" system problems.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE

We know this experience has been frustrating for all concerned. We appreciate your patience and are hopeful that the efforts of NFC and Nations Bank will improve the operations in the near future.

NEED TO BUY SOMETHING?

For many of us this is the busiest time of the year...if you need to buy something here are your options:

1. Purchase it on your office VISA Card (up to \$2500 per single purchase). (Make sure you ask the vendor up front if they accept them.).
2. Use your Convenience Checks (up to \$2500).
3. Send an AD-700 or call the Purchasing Team in MRP-BS, Minneapolis (612-370-2146). **If you want to avoid paperwork of an "unauthorized procurement", use one of these options.**

REALTY NEWS

DATABASE FORMAT-TRACKING AGENCY AND GSA LEASES

Realty Services has been busy working on new database formats to track Agency and GSA leases. The Departmental tracking system called Foundation Information for Real property Management (FIRM) is not operational within the context required by APHIS and its customers. Our Realty Technician, Maria Zapata, has been very busy entering GSA lease data into the new database and will have reports ready for mailing to the field by July. If anyone is interested in receiving Agency lease listings with rental information, please give Maria a call on Area Code (612) 370-2475.

NEW RENT TRACKING SYSTEM

Realty Specialist Ann Dreier has developed a rent tracking system for our southern and northern border stations. The system identifies all of the border stations' yearly/monthly rents and square footage. Anyone wanting a copy of the listing can call Ann at Area Code (612) 370-2104. She will e-mail the list to you through Lotus Notes.

UPDATED WEB SITE INFORMATION

Have you visited the Realty Team's updated Web Site? Our customers can now download and print APHIS Form 114 (Request to Establish, Close, Expand or Release, or Relocate Space and Facilities). We have also posted the "General Requirements for Space" questionnaire used to identify your space requirements. One of Realty Service's goals is to be able to provide our services electronically to all program field offices, commercial and private lessors. Why rely on snail mail and a blurred fax when you can print these forms out at your desk in minutes?

BASIC SECURITY SERVICES

You may be asking "Just what does that fourteen cents per square foot on the GSA Rent Bill for Basic Security Services get me, anyway?" The Federal Protective Service (FPS) is one arm of the General Services Administration (GSA) and, as with all of GSA's functions, now bills their various customers for services. For your fourteen cents you get access to FPS for most any problem you may have at your work site. You can schedule FPS to come to your work site to perform a variety of services including security risk assessments, make recommendations, as well as instruction on how to handle bomb threats. In addition, they will do Rape Awareness and Violence in the Workplace seminars. If your office is in a Federal Building, you probably are seeing security charges in the dollar and a half range. This is because those locations, where GSA has physical security on site, have metal detectors and roving patrolmen. Therefore, costs are significantly higher.

Telecommunications Ordering, Billing, Inventory (TOBI)

The APHIS Telecommunications, Ordering, and Billing Inventory (TOBI) Team has worked over the past year to compile an accurate inventory of all of APHIS telecommunications systems. This information was collected from Headquarters and all APHIS field offices and now resides in the USDA database.

Because the initial effort for collection of this information began in March of 1998, we need to include any changes to the existing information that have occurred since then. Adjustments to the database have to be made in order to maintain a valid and current inventory. Therefore, we are requesting that the documentation for any purchases, transfer or other disposal of telecommunications equipment be provided to the TOBI Team by sending a copy of the documentation (Purchase Order or AD Form 107) to:

Ms. Robin Cecil
APHIS TOBI Team
USDA, APHIS, ITC
4700 River Road, Unit 102
Riverdale, MD 20737

Specifically, we need the following information:

1. Equipment type (i.e., fax, cell phone, global positioning system, PBX, router, hub, radio, bridge, file server, e-mail server, fax server or modem)
2. Manufacturer
3. Model
4. Serial number
5. Status of equipment (i.e., active, standby, spare, surplus or defective)
6. Y2K compliant status (i.e., yes or no)
7. Location of equipment (office, street address, room or suite number, city, state and zip)
8. Contact person and telephone number

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact either Robin Cecil at (301)734-5154 or Maria Nieto-Menendez at (305)275-1948.

We thank you for your cooperation in this effort.

FTS2001 Calling Card Information

* Please go into (www.aphis.usda.gov/telecom) internet address and download the information on the new MCI
* Federal Calling Card Features and Processing.

* The Calling Card request form is also attached for your convenience.

MCI WORLDCOM AUDIO CONFERENCING SERVICE

MCI Conference Specialists are available during calls to minimize network difficulties and provide troubleshooting support. MCI Conference Specialists can take corrective action before a conference participant is affected. These specially trained and experienced MCI Conference Specialists are available on a standby basis to respond to problems during calls. An operator can be contacted at any time by pressing * 0.

1. Types of Audio Conferences

There are two types of audio conferencing services designed to meet the Agency's need for speed, flexibility and reliability.

Toll Meet Me Service

MCI WorldCom assigns a standard long distance number at the time the reservation is made. Participants dial into the MCI WorldCom Conferencing Service Center to join an audio conference. Participants are responsible for their own long distance charges.

Toll Free Meet Me Service

MCI WorldCom Toll Free Meet Me access makes it easy to bring together employees, customers or business associates while they are on the road. A one-time toll free number can be requested for an audio conference or a specific toll free number for regularly scheduled audio conferences can be maintained. Either way, the call participants simply dial the number from wherever they are at the time-in the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico or the US Virgin Islands. For extra security, a pre-assigned pass code is given to all audioconference participants to enter into the call.

Question: What do individuals at foreign sites do to reserve a call? How do they make the call to join a conference?

Answer: Participants from foreign sites would have to dial a USA 10-digit number to make a reservation. They would also need to establish a Toll Meet Me Call since they cannot access 800 or toll free service overseas.

2. Audio Conferencing Features

- Pay for what you use, not for what is reserved;
- Conference calls are not cut off if you go past the reserved time;
- Reservations can be made for ASAP conference calls and started within 20 minutes;
- Standing Reservation - Recurring conference calls can be scheduled up to a year in advance;
- A MCI Conference Specialist is available to fulfill special requests during your call by pressing “*0” at any time;
- Tone In - A tone will sound when someone enters the conference call .

3. How to Schedule an Audio Conference Reservation

A Call to Make a Reservation

- Dial 1-800-475-5000

B Provide Information

The MCI reservationist will need the following information to complete your reservation:

- Your authorization code (provided to you after your site is registered).
- The APHIS conference leader's name and telephone number for the time of the conference.
- Date and time (specify time zone) and approximate duration of call.
- Number of locations participating on the call .

C Select The Type of Conference Access (these can be combined)

- Toll Free Meet Me
- Toll Meet Me

MCI WORLDCOM AUDIO CONFERENCING SERVICE (CONTINUED)

D Receive Confirmation

- A faxed confirmation will be sent to you.

4. Important Telephone Numbers to Know

- Reservations 1-800-475-5000
- Customer Relations 1-800-475-0600
- Additional Information on other Conferencing Services 1-800-480-3600
- Information by Fax 1-800-938-0966
- APHIS Contacts: Lewis Barnes 301-734-5143
Mimi Fowler-Coristine 301-734-4901

5. Establishing an Account at MCI

You must establish an account at MCI before you can use the audioconferencing service. You cannot use the Calling Card to use the audioconferencing service on FTS2001 and pay government rates. If you use the Calling Card, you will pay commercial rates for the conference.

To establish an account, APHIS sites need to submit the following information to the APHIS Designated Agency Representative--Lewis Barnes at LEWIS.V.BARNES@USDA.GOV. This information includes:

- First Name and Last Name (APHIS representative at the site)
- Street Address (Physical address)
- City
- State
- Zip code
- Telephone Number
- E-mail
- FTS2001 Hierarchy Code (On line at WWW.APHIS.USDA.GOV/TELECOM). It is a 28 digit code.

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Looking for Wireless Equipment and Services?

- Check out these helpful web sites.
- **www.point.com** This web site lets you search by the city and state where you need service. It gives the various vendors for that area, coverage maps of the service areas and cost comparisons among the vendors. You can compare various vendor's plans side by side. (Please note that these are commercial, not government, prices.) Once you find the service and equipment that you believe will meet your needs, print out the information. You can then check the following web site to see if there is a GSA contract for that vendor. **www.fts.gsa.gov/wireless_store/index.html** If there is a GSA contract, you can also print out that information and attach it to your AD700. If there is not a GSA contract, we will take the information on the commercial vendor and ask them for the department that handles government sales. Usually the government price will be around 15% less than the commercial price you saw on the web. **For inventory and tracking purposes we ask that all procurements for Wireless Equipment be sent through the Minneapolis Business Services office.**
- Some things to consider when selecting a cellular service provider. What will be the **coverage area**? Where will the phone be used the majority of the time? Will regional coverage be all that you need? Will the user travel a lot? Do they require nation wide coverage? After you select the proper coverage, the next consideration is **how much air time** will be used each month? Will there be heavy use or light use just for emergencies? (This will help you decide how many minutes to have on your plan.) How much do any **additional minutes cost**? These costs can all be compared among the different plans on the above web site. **If you need additional assistance please call any of the following: Diana Halsey 612 370-2122, Michelle Fernandez 612 370-2390, Arlette Johnson 612 370-2229 or Bob Strickland 303 969-6565 ext. 239.**

Motor Vehicle Accidents - Government-Owned Vehicles

STOP!!!!

Don't Repair the Vehicle - Until You Notify the Minneapolis M&RP Claims Team- Here's Why:

If you are driving a Government-Owned Vehicle (GOV) and have an accident with someone driving a Privately-Owned Vehicle (POV), DO NOT have the GOV repaired until we settle the claim. If the driver of the POV was at fault, we will attempt to collect for repairs to the GOV. If repairs are done prior to settlement of the claim, the program cannot recover the repair costs. The collected funds must be deposited in the General Fund.

RENTAL CARS

Remember: When renting a car for government business, always show your travel orders and/or your government travel card. When you do, any damage done to the vehicle during the rental period will be covered under the Military Traffic Management Command Contract.

VEHICLE REPAIRS

Reminder #1: Vehicle repairs over \$2,500.00 need to be approved by the Property Team. If you have any questions, please contact Ginny Madden at (612) 370-2151

APHIS 64 CARDS

Reminder #2: APHIS 64 cards that are stapled, taped or faxed are not scannable and, therefore, cannot be processed. Also: if you need additional cards, please request them before the end of the quarter. Cards received after the 10th of the month following the end of the quarter will be considered delinquent. Thanks for your cooperation.

HUMAN RESOURCES NEWS

U.S. SAVINGS BONDS

Effective immediately, Series I U.S. Savings Bonds have been enhanced to include a \$200.00 Bond Denomination. To enroll, please forward Form SB-2253, Savings Bond Card, to your personnel office. The new bond is in addition to ones for \$50.00, \$75.00, \$100.00, \$500.00 and \$1,000.00.

If you would like more information on the Series I Savings Bonds, you can access it from the Internet at <http://www.publicdebt.treas.gov>.

LIFE INSURANCE FORM CHANGED

* The SF-2817, Life Insurance Election Form, has been revised. Please review your forms stock and
* destroy any forms older than the April 1999 revision. The new forms can be obtained from the
* Landover Warehouse.
*

AN APPRECIATION: JIM GRIFFIN

On April 16, 1999, the Minneapolis Business Site suddenly lost one of its own, Purchasing Agent Jim Griffin, to a heart attack. He was 51 years old.

In 1989, Jim joined our office in Minneapolis (then known as the Field Servicing Office) as a Clerk Typist in the Purchasing Section, later being assigned as a Purchasing Agent (where he was recently promoted to a GS-6). As a testimony to his customer service, Jim was the recipient of many performance awards for going above and beyond what was necessary for his customers.

Jim enjoyed marathon running, dancing and tutoring children at area schools. He was also active in his church.

Jim is survived by two children (daughter Jennifer Vazquez of Deltona, FL and son John of Cullman, AL), two grandchildren, his mother Mary and brothers Dennis and Michael.

Jim was a vital part of the Minneapolis Business Site and he will be sorely missed.

Please help us improve our Web Services

by answering three questions:

1. If we could do one thing on our Website to personally help you, what would it be?

2. What type of information would you like to be available on our Web Site 24 hours a day and seven days a week?

3. What doesn't work for you on our Web Site, e.g. navigation, usability of certain areas, not enough information on a specific topic?

Please fax your response to Bill Rosenfeld at 612.370.2295, mail it to him at "MBS, APHIS, USDA; Suite 510C, 100 North Sixth Street; Minneapolis, Minnesota 55405, or call Bill at 612.370.2093.

Thanks for your interest!

**Our new Web Address is
"http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mpls"**